

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 01587 061807Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0011

UNCLAS COLOMBO 1587

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, BTIO, BTRA, CE

SUBJ: REPLY TO LETTER FROM CLAUDE A. HUTT, HUGHES AIRWEST

TO: MR. CLAUDE A. HUTT
HUGHES AIRWEST
3125 CLEARVIEW WAY
SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA 94402
TELEX 33-1493
SITA: SFORZRW
CABLE: AIRWEST, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

1. THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF MARCH 29 REGARDING AIR CEY-
LON'S NEED FOR MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. I TOO
AM SORRY I WAS NOT HERE TO MEET YOU LAST WEEK.

2. YOUR IDEA OF A SIX WEEK STUDY TO DETERMINE THE REQUIRE-
MENTS OF A NEW SRI LANKAN AIRLINE SEEMS A REASONABLE WAY TO
APPROACH THE PROBLEM. ACCORDING TO APRIL 5 PRESS, HOWEVER,
THE MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE HEADED BY MRS. WIMALA KANNAN-
GARA, MINISTER OF SHIPPING, AVIATION AND TOURISM, HAS ALREADY
BEGUN EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS FROM FORTY-SIX AIRLINES. WITH
THIS MANY OFFERS IN HAND, I DOUBT THE MINISTER COULD BE PER-
SUADED TO DELAY THE EVALUATION PROCESS WHILE A STUDY, HOWEVER
USEFUL, IS UNDERTAKEN. SUCH A STUDY WILL HAVE TO BE MADE AT
SOME POINT, AND I WOULD GUESS IT WILL BE DONE BY WHOMEVER IS
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GIVEN THE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT.

3. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE APRIL 10 DEADLINE TO COM-
plete evaluations is not firm. THE FACT THAT SRI LANKA IS
ASKING FOR OUTSIDE HELP IN RUNNING ITS AIRLINE IS A TACIT
ADMISSION THAT NO ONE HERE KNOWS VERY MUCH ABOUT THE AIRLINE
BUSINESS. I SUSPECT THE MINISTERIAL SUB-COMMITTEE WILL FIND

IT DOES NOT HAVE THE EXPERTISE TO SORT OUT FORTY-SIX OFFERS.
I AGREE THAT THE COMMITTEE WILL NEED IMPARTIAL HELP, AND I
PLAN TO MAKE MY VIEWS ON THIS MATTER KNOWN AT APPROPRIATE
GOVERNMENT LEVELS. YOU CAN BE ASSURED THAT I WILL EN-
COURAGE THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE EVERY CONSIDERATION TO
AMERICAN FIRMS IN THIS REGARD. BUT UNLESS YOU HAVE ALREADY
PUT IN A PROPOSAL, I DOUBT THAT HUGHES AIRWEST WILL STAND
MUCH OF A CHANCE.

4. PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU PLAN TO VISIT SRI LANKA AGAIN
SO WE CAN ARRANGE TO MEET.

W. HOWARD WRIGGINS
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR
AMERICAN EMBASSY
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
WRIGGINS

NOTE BY OC/T: PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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